

was also [intended] to be the fate of the Roma community." It will not do, 60 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, to stand by in silence while Roma are crudely caricatured as criminals, just as they were by the Nazis. And we must not stand by in silence when a member of Parliament dismisses the criminal act of trafficking of children, simply because they are Romani.

#### BELARUS—OUTPOST OF TYRANNY

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, over the course of the last few months, we have witnessed dramatic events in one of Europe's largest countries, Ukraine. The Orange Revolution has clearly shown that people power can bring about peaceful democratic change some thought was not possible in a former Soviet state. As a result, and with the support of the United States, Europe and international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE, Ukraine is on the path to freedom and democracy. Notwithstanding the formidable challenges that remain to overcome the legacy of the past, Ukraine now has a real chance at consolidating its democracy and further integrating into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Unfortunately, the news out of Belarus, Ukraine's neighboring fellow eastern Slavic country to the north stands in stark contrast to the encouraging news coming out of Ukraine. Secretary Rice, in her confirmation testimony, characterized Belarus, along with North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Burma, and Zimbabwe as an outpost of tyranny and asserted that America stands with oppressed people on every continent. Belarus, under Alexander Lukashenka's now 10-year repressive rule, has the worst human rights record of any country in Europe. Lukashenka's regime has increasingly violated human rights and freedoms and has made a mockery of commitments that Belarus freely undertook when it joined the OSCE in 1992.

Nothing has changed for the better since last October's fundamentally flawed parliamentary elections and rigged referendum allowing Lukashenka unlimited terms as president. In November, Lukashenka appointed Viktor Sheiman as head of the powerful Presidential Administration, despite credible evidence linking Sheiman to the disappearances of opposition leaders and a journalist in 1999 and 2000.

The harassment and persecution of civil society has intensified. A top opposition figure, Mikhail Marinich, was sentenced in late December on the charge of stealing, of all things, U.S. government property—in this case, computers—despite the fact that the U.S. Embassy in Minsk makes no claims against Marinich. Clearly, Lukashenka wants to eliminate Marinich as a potential candidate for the 2006 presidential elections.

Other opposition leaders—Valery Levaneuski and Alyaksandr Vasilyeu—

continue to serve terms in a minimum security colony after having been found guilty of "public slander" of the Belarusian leader. Their crime? Distributing leaflets urging people to take part in an unauthorized rally. The leaflets contained a satirical poem about Lukashenka. Another example of Belarus' reluctance to promote human rights is the recent refusal to grant a visa to former OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Chairman and Romanian Foreign Minister Adrian Severin, who now serves as the UN Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on Belarus. The Belarusian regime has also clamped down on independent NGOs and prodemocracy political parties with Kafkaesque legal requirements and has mounted a full-fledged assault on independent trade unions. Problems are being experienced by religious communities attempting to operate freely.

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, charged with monitoring and encouraging compliance by all 55 participating States with OSCE agreements, I call upon the Belarusian authorities to live up to their freely-undertaken commitments with respect to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Last October, President Bush signed into law the Belarus Democracy Act, which had been introduced in the Senate by then Helsinki Commission Chairman Senator Campbell and in the House by commission co-chair CHRIS SMITH, stating:

We welcome this legislation as a means to bolster friends of freedom and to nurture the growth of democratic values, habits, and institutions within Belarus. The fate of Belarus will rest not with a dictator, but with the students, trade unionists, civic and religious leaders, journalists, and all citizens of Belarus claiming freedom for their nation.

It is essential that we in the Congress, together with the administration and the OSCE, keep faith with the courageous people of Belarus struggling to ensure freedom and democratic values for their long-suffering country.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### MS. NICOLE WAYANT AND MR. CORMAC O'CONNOR

• Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I congratulate and honor two young Kansas students who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Nicole Wayant of Topeka, KS, and Cormac O'Connor of Prairie Village, KS, have just been named State Honorees in The 2005 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, an annual honor conferred on only one high school student and one middle-level student in each State, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Ms. Wayant is being recognized for creating a youth health council to promote the benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle among the students in her school district.

Mr. O'Connor is being recognized for implementing an intergenerational arts program that brought senior citizens and at-risk children together for classes in visual arts, movements, theater and jazz.

In light of numerous statistics that indicate Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it's vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contributions these young people have made. People of all ages need to think more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our towns and neighborhoods. Young volunteers like Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

The program that brought these young role models to our attention—The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards—was created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1995 to impress upon all youth volunteers that their contributions are critically important and highly valued, and to inspire other young people to follow their example. Over the past 10 years, the program has become the Nation's largest youth recognition effort based solely on unity service, with more than 170,000 young people participating since its inception.

Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor should be extremely proud to have been singled out from such a large group of dedicated volunteers. As part of their recognition, they will come to Washington in early May, along with other 2005 Spirit of Community honorees from across the country, for several days of special events, including a Congressional breakfast on Capitol Hill. While here in Washington, ten will be named America's top youth volunteers of the year by a distinguished national selection committee.

I applaud Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor for their initiative in seeking to make their communities better places to live, and for the positive impact they have had on the lives of others. I also salute the other young people in my State who were named Distinguished Finalists by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards for their outstanding volunteer service. They are Shawn Bryant of Leavenworth, KS, Brad Harris of Saint Paul, KS, Amanda Knox of Clifton, KS, and Creighton Olsen of Larned, KS.

All of these young people have demonstrated a level of commitment and accomplishment that is truly extraordinary in today's world and they deserve our sincere admiration and respect. Their actions show that young Americans can—and do—play important roles in their communities, and